

HINTS FOR HOMEOWNERS

Hurricane Preparedness Begins At The Foundation

(NAPSA)—While the National Hurricane Center projects storms during the 2006 hurricane season will mirror the intensity of Hurricane Katrina, one of the deadliest hurricanes in the history of the U.S., and one which caused more than \$50 billion in damages to the Gulf Coast region, there are measures homeowners can take to better prepare their new-construction homes during the building phase.

The National Weather Service (NWS), the primary source of weather data, forecasts and warnings in the U.S., recommends homeowners verify that their homes meet current building code requirements for high winds, one of the many components associated with vicious Category 3+ hurricanes. The NWS says structures built to meet or exceed current building code high-wind provisions have a much better chance of surviving violent windstorms.

“Florida has some of the most stringent building codes in the U.S., led by Miami Dade County in South Florida,” says Dr. Ronald Zollo, professor of civil and architectural engineering at the University of Miami and a licensed professional engineer. “Homeowners and builders need to move away from the traditional structures that cannot withstand the type of lateral forces that extreme weather, such as hurricanes, can place on a home.”

Another concern for homeowners is flooding. Common with hurricanes, flooding can lead to extensive mold and structural damage. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) states that more than half of the nation’s population lives and works within 50 miles of a coast, areas typically



more prone to hurricane flooding.

Preparing For The Future

Dr. Zollo encourages prospective new homeowners to think proactively. He urges those considering a new home purchase or a rebuild in coastal regions to talk with their builder or architects to understand local building codes and the effects of hurricane-force winds on their homes.

Dr. Zollo led a team from the University of Miami to survey damage from 1992’s Hurricane Andrew in Florida. He believes that concrete materials, by virtue of their mass, rigidity and physical properties, are generally expected to outperform other construction materials when subjected to extreme environmental conditions, if constructed according to proper building codes.

A proven solution to reduce the structural damage from hurricanes is installing insulating concrete forms (ICFs)—hollow foam forms or panels that hold concrete in place.

“Homes built with ICFs using reinforced concrete provide homeowners with sustainable structures capable of withstanding extreme weather conditions,” says Dr. Zollo. “They’re easier to clean up after hurricane weather or

flooding, and they provide the homeowner with moisture resistance in the walls themselves when combined with appropriate interior finishes. Those utilizing ICFs can also expect greater energy efficiency due to added thermal protection.”

Owens Corning, a leader in building science technologies, produces the ICF option Fold-Form®. Solid concrete-reinforced walls built with Fold-Form® have been proven to provide superior protection against flying debris from winds as high as 200 miles per hour, when compared to conventional framed walls or hollow concrete block walls. By comparison, FEMA states that Hurricane Katrina achieved landfall wind speeds of 140 mph in southeast Louisiana.

According to Dr. Zollo, “In the future, I think we’ll see faster recovery times for communities built with ICFs than those that are built without.”

“While ICFs meet some of the U.S.’s most strict building codes and are up to nine times stronger than traditional wood frames, they’re not just for hurricane protection,” says Janet Albright, accessories manager, Residential & Commercial Insulation for Owens Corning. “We’re seeing a dramatic increase in consumer demand throughout the entire U.S. for building products that are greener, offer greater energy efficiencies, air and moisture management and contribute to greater comfort levels by reducing noise in the home.”

To learn more about the benefits of ICFs before, during and after hurricane season, contact your local builder. Additional information is also available at www.foldform.com.